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MASTERS OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**TITLE: Effectiveness of Interagency Cooperation at the Provincial Reconstruction Team  
Level in Afghanistan**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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## *Executive Summary*

**Title:** Effectiveness of Interagency Cooperation at the Provincial Reconstruction Team Level in Afghanistan.

**Author:** Major Christopher McArthur, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** Interagency cooperation at the Provincial Reconstruction Team level is hindering the effectiveness of U.S. led Provincial Reconstruction Teams in accomplishing their mission.

**Discussion:** The topic of interagency cooperation is important because military power is no longer enough to counter the post-Cold War security environment which is being defined by non-state actors conducting asymmetric warfare. The goal of this study is to examine the level of interagency cooperation within a Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Afghanistan and determine its impact on PRT effectiveness. How PRT's have adapted since the first team was formed in 2002 is central to this paper. This study will also look at what lessons if any can be taken from the PRT concept and applied towards fixing the interagency at the strategic level thus ensuring a better interagency response in future conflicts.

The Provincial Reconstruction Team concept is not new. It has its historical beginnings in the CORDS program of the Vietnam War. Provincial Reconstruction Teams were created as a means of extending the reach of the Afghan government outside Kabul. Today they serve as the primary interface between the coalition and Afghan provincial and local governments. PRT's illustrate the need for effective, integrated action to achieve government-wide "unity of effort" in complex contingency operations.

**Conclusion:** The PRT concept currently in operation in Afghanistan is characteristic of the United States continual focus on the military arm of national power while under resourcing the diplomatic and development instruments of national power. The principle challenges facing the PRT today include a military dominated organizational structure, resourcing shortfalls, lack of unity of effort among the different agencies that compose the PRT, and lack of unity of command from the tactical to the strategic level. Until a fundamental shift from hard to soft power occurs, the interagency stovepipes within the PRT structure will continue to hinder its effectiveness.

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### *Preface*

I would like to thank Dr. Mark Jacobsen for his help, guidance and patience throughout this writing endeavor. As I began my research on Provincial Reconstruction Teams I was quickly overwhelmed by the massive amount of material on the subject as well as the complexity of the interagency system. Without Dr. Jacobsen's continuous help and encouragement I would likely have never made it past the first draft. His vast amount of knowledge on the interagency is an inspiration to anyone interested in this complex topic.

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Finally, I would like to thank my wife, April, for without her support this paper would have never been possible. She is the rock that holds our family together and the hardest working person I know. Her help throughout the academic year proofreading my papers continuously made up for my grammatical shortfalls. She works tirelessly taking care of the kids, house and dogs so that I may have every opportunity to be successful. No words can ever express my gratitude for all she does.

## INTRODUCTION

Unity of effort can only be achieved through close, continuous interagency and interdepartmental coordination and cooperation, which are necessary to overcome discord, inadequate structure and procedures, incompatible communications, cultural differences, and bureaucratic and personnel limitations.<sup>1</sup>

- JP 1

Today's complex national security environment requires close cooperation among various governmental agencies. The U.S. Department of Defense Joint Publication 1-02 defines unity of effort as the coordination and cooperation toward common objectives, even if the participants are not necessarily part of the same command or organization.<sup>2</sup> The concept of civil-military unity of effort and cooperation has been put to the test in Afghanistan with the creation of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT). PRTs are the means by which various U.S. agencies coordinate their diplomatic, economic, reconstruction and counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup> The Provincial Reconstruction Team concept has been active in Afghanistan since 2002 when the first team was formed in the city of Gardez.<sup>4</sup> Since then a total of twenty-six Provincial Reconstruction Teams have been established. The formation of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in both Afghanistan and Iraq has shown that the United States understands the importance civil-military and interagency cooperation will have on the outcome of twenty-first century conflicts. The U.S. government must now institutionalize the PRT concept in order to avoid a repeat of the ad hoc nature in which the PRT concept was developed and implemented in the current conflict. This paper argues that agency stovepipes, statutory requirements and cultural differences are impacting unity of effort at the ground level. In conclusion, this paper asserts that the effectiveness of PRTs can be improved by enhancing civil-military cooperation.

This paper will focus on American-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and the level of civil-military cooperation within those teams towards achieving United States and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) goals. This paper will begin with a look at the history and development of the interagency structure and how it has changed in response to the September 11, 2001 attacks. This will be followed by a look at the development of the PRT concept from its roots in the Vietnam War's Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) program to the establishment of the first PRT in Afghanistan in 2002. Following a short discussion on the structure, organization and mission of U.S.-led PRTs, this paper will discuss current issues with civil-military cooperation within PRTs that are hampering greater operational success. Finally, this paper will offer recommendations for improving interagency cooperation at both the provincial and strategic levels in order to improve PRT effectiveness. In short, this paper is important as lessons learned today regarding interagency coordination at the strategic, operational, and tactical level will help the U.S. Government (USG) to be better prepared to conduct stability operations in the future.

## HISTORY OF THE INTERAGENCY

If we'd all had the information in one agency, by God, I believe we could have foreseen what was going to happen in Pearl Harbor.<sup>5</sup>

- President Truman

War has historically been the catalyst for interagency change.<sup>6</sup> The modern history of interagency cooperation has gone through four distinct periods.<sup>7</sup> These include the immediate post-World War II period (1946-1949), the Cold War period predominantly defined by the CORDS program, the post-Cold War period leading up to September 11, 2001 which was shaped by Presidential Decision Directive 56, and the post September 11, 2001 (9/11) period shaped by National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD 44).<sup>8</sup> The interagency can be defined as

United States Government agencies and departments which include the State Department, Department of Defense, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to name a few. Likewise, interagency coordination is defined by Joint Publication 3-8 *Interagency Coordination during Joint Operations* as the coordination that occurs between elements of Department of Defense and engaged US Government agencies for the purpose of achieving an objective.<sup>9</sup> Defining the interagency has been relatively easy, getting the organizations to work together given resource and ideology differences has been the challenge for the U.S. government.

The interagency structure has its origins in the U.S. Constitution which makes the President responsible for the security of the United States.<sup>10</sup> The interagency structure did not become formalized until the end of World War II with the passage of the National Security Act of 1947.<sup>11</sup> The public outrage over the Pearl Harbor surprise attack drove Congress towards interagency reform as a means of preventing another attack on the United States.<sup>12</sup> As a result of public sediment, Congress held a series of investigative hearings into the Pearl Harbor attack during the post war period from 1945 to 1946.<sup>13</sup> The result of these hearings was the National Security Act of 1947 which was aimed at improving the integration of national security strategy through the establishment of a National Security Council within the executive branch.<sup>14</sup> The National Security Council would then advise the President on the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies, thereby enabling the Department of Defense and other governmental agencies to cooperate more effectively in matters involving national security.<sup>15</sup>

The interagency structure established by the 1947 National Security Act was well suited at meeting the United States containment strategy for the Cold War.<sup>16</sup> This structure was in place thru the Vietnam War. However, President Lyndon Johnson realized that the military

instrument of national power alone was not effective against an insurgency. Fighting an insurgency would require the alignment of hard and soft powers and a change in the interagency structure. The result was the implementation of the CORDS program which would bring unity of effort and unity of command with respect to pacification programs in Vietnam.

The next significant change to the interagency structure was the release of Presidential Decision Directive 56 by President Bill Clinton in 1997. Presidential Decision Directive 56 was directed at managing complex contingency operations and built upon lessons learned in Somalia and Haiti.<sup>17</sup> Presidential Decision Directive 56 was primarily focused on interagency planning for complex operations. This directive would be the guiding document for the interagency until it was replaced in 2005 by Presidential Directive 44 which was itself a response to interagency failures leading up to the attacks of September 11, 2001 and interagency failures in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

The United States's concept and approach to global security has changed fundamentally since September 11, 2001.<sup>18</sup> In the post-Cold War security environment the United States will no longer be able to solve instability solely through military means.<sup>19</sup> Retired Army General Volney Warner describes the nature of future conflicts as predominantly non-state actors using asymmetric warfare.<sup>20</sup> This new security environment will be more political than military and require the United States to use both hard and soft powers in an integrated strategy.<sup>21</sup> The interagency failures that led to the 9/11 attacks are reminiscent of the Pearl Harbor attacks. Furthermore, the resulting post-conflict planning failures in Iraq point to a changing environment where interagency cooperation is critical.<sup>22</sup> A constituent of Representative Vic Snyder, chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, who was in 2008 a civilian serving in Iraq, told him, "I sometimes think that the differences in conflicts between our agency and

other agencies of the U.S. Government are greater than the differences between us and the Iraqis.”<sup>23</sup> The strategic environment since 9/11 has resulted in a significant shift of focus towards stability and reconstruction operations.<sup>24</sup> The Department of Defense has stated that, “Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct with proficiency equivalent to combat operations.”<sup>25</sup> In short, the lesson for the new post-Cold War security environment is that the United States must develop a better interagency structure that can respond to future conflicts as well as enable better planning for phase four operations.<sup>26</sup>

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRT CONCEPT**

The PRT concept employed in Afghanistan is not new but has its historical roots in Vietnam.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, the interagency issues and disagreements that occurred during the Vietnam War are very similar to what is occurring at all levels of the interagency today. By 1966 President Johnson had become upset with the lack of coordination and centralized direction of U.S. pacification efforts in South Vietnam.<sup>28</sup> He watched the Ambassador’s Country Team attempt to coordinate the activities of multiple agencies with little success.<sup>29</sup> From 1965 to 1967 there was significant interagency disagreement as to whether the United States counterinsurgency policy in Vietnam should be aimed at defeating the insurgency militarily or emphasizing a policy that promotes political, economic, and social development as a means to deprive the insurgency of popular support.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, civilian agencies wanted pacification programs to be under civilian control while the military preferred the existing structure which placed all pacification programs under Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) control to remain in place.<sup>31</sup> Recognizing the U.S. government’s flawed pacification structure in Vietnam, President Lyndon B. Johnson established the CORDS program in 1967 to provide

unified American advice and support to the South Vietnamese pacification effort.<sup>32</sup> Pacification is another term for counterinsurgency. Until the implementation of the CORDS program, the numerous U.S. agencies had been operating in a semi-autonomous manner pursuant to their congressionally mandated statutory requirements.<sup>33</sup> CORDS solved the “loose country team” approach to pacification in Vietnam by placing all pacification efforts under unified management.<sup>34</sup>

Under the CORDS program, a civilian with ambassadorial rank was given responsibility for “the direction, coordination, and supervision in Washington of U.S. non-military programs.”<sup>35</sup> The individual picked for this position was Robert Komer, an abrasive and brash forty-four year old member of President Johnson’s National Security Staff . As the civilian head of the program he would have authority over the agencies involved in pacification efforts (Department of State, Agency for International Development, Central Intelligence Agency, and the United States Information Agency), a voice in the allocation of military resources to the program and the power to support the U.S. Embassy in Saigon on matters within his purview.<sup>36</sup>

In order to ensure civil-military cooperation President Johnson appointed Komer as General Westmorland’s deputy, a three star equivalent position that made him equal to General Westmorland’s deputy military commanders.<sup>37</sup> The result was that pacification programs now had a single individual responsible for pacification activities from the tactical to the strategic level.<sup>38</sup> CORDS helped establish the vitality of the South Vietnamese Government by providing competitive services and local security.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, CORDS pushed the MACV to change its strategy from “search and destroy” to “clear and hold” as well as place greater emphasis on security for Vietnamese living in the countryside.<sup>40</sup> In short, after pursuing a conventional warfare strategy that was unsuccessful, the United States shifted course and began a

comprehensive, integrated program of pacification, civic action and economic development that was able to pacify significant numbers of hamlets in South Vietnam by 1972.<sup>41</sup>

United States actions in Afghanistan began in 2001 when the United States provided weapons and air support to the Afghan Northern Alliance and their efforts to defeat the Taliban.<sup>42</sup> Following the defeat of the Taliban, the United States sought the help of its allies in establishing a transitional government that would eventually become democratically elected and able to maintain security and provide essential services to the Afghan population.<sup>43</sup> In response, the United Nations Security Council passed United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1386 establishing the International Security Assistance Force, "to assist the Afghan Interim Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas, so that the Afghan Interim Authority as well as the personnel of the United Nations can operate in a secure environment."<sup>44</sup> The limited capacity of the Afghan government and calls for increased security outside of Kabul would eventually lead the United States to develop the PRT concept in order to expand the government's capability to provide security and essential services.

The first American efforts at reconstruction in Afghanistan began in early 2002 with the establishment of Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells composed of four to twelve Army Civil Affairs soldiers.<sup>45</sup> They were tasked to assess humanitarian needs, implement small-scale reconstruction efforts, and establish relations with United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) and non-governmental agencies (NGO) operating in Afghanistan.<sup>46</sup> A significant limiting factor of these cells was security. The dozen or so soldiers that staffed these teams were not staffed to provide self-reliant security for their day-to-day operations. In 2002 the United States decided to expand the capability of the Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cell program by adding a force protection component and representatives from U.S. civilian

agencies.<sup>47</sup> This was the birth of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, initially called Joint Reconstruction Teams. The United States at this time opposed the expansion of ISAF outside of Kabul for fear of becoming involved in “nation building” and having to commit a large peacekeeping force.<sup>48</sup> As calls for increased security outside Kabul mounted, the U.S. proposed the PRT concept which would allow for increased security with a minimal footprint. The purpose of the PRT would be to expand the reach of Civil Affairs Teams as well as to increase the participation of civilian agencies in stabilization programs.<sup>49</sup> The result was the establishment of the first Provincial Reconstruction Team in the city of Gardez in November 2002.<sup>50</sup> The new PRT concept had a significant security component in relation to the Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells but lacked civilian governance and development experts. By March 2003 the Gardez PRT had one civilian from the State Department and one civilian from USAID assigned to the team.<sup>51</sup> The civilian members reported directly to their specific agency. The PRT structure was initially placed under the control of the Combined Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF). In August 2003 NATO assumed control of ISAF as the United States shifted its focus to Iraq. The United Nations also provided ISAF a new mandate to expand outside Kabul.<sup>52</sup> By the end of 2003 four additional American led PRTs and three ISAF PRTs were operational.<sup>53</sup> As military operations were expanded deeper into Afghanistan and the U.S. transitioned its focus to Iraq, it was decided to disband CJCMOTF and place the PRT structure under the control of ISAF which had authority throughout Afghanistan under the United Nations mandate.<sup>54</sup>

The PRT concept was established in an ad hoc manner in response to the changing environment in Afghanistan. In 2003 the American Embassy in Afghanistan attempted to bring structure to the PRT concept by setting forth the mission for PRTs. The mission for PRTs was to

help establish security, extend the authority of the Afghan government outside of Kabul, and assist in reconstruction.<sup>55</sup> As PRTs transitioned to ISAF control they were given an updated mission statement. The mission of the PRT as stated in the ISAF operational plan is to, "assist The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to extend its authority, in order to facilitate the development of a stable and secure environment in the identified area of operations, and enable Security Sector Reform (SSR) and reconstruction efforts."<sup>56</sup> The State Department believed that PRTs would lead reconstruction efforts in areas considered too dangerous for traditional aid organizations.<sup>57</sup> The Department of Defense, State Department, and USAID would be the three primary agencies participating in the PRT program and would focus on the three primary nation building functions of security, governance, and development.<sup>58</sup> The Department of Defense would be the lead agency for improving security, the State Department would lead the political outreach programs, and USAID would lead construction efforts.<sup>59</sup> In short, PRTs were intended to be a short term solution that would eventually give way to traditional development efforts as PRTs achieved their goal of improving stability.<sup>60</sup>

### **PRT STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION**

A Provincial Reconstruction Team as defined by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) PRT Handbook is a "joint, integrated military-civilian organization, staffed and supported by ISAF member countries, operating at the provincial level within Afghanistan."<sup>61</sup> The structure and composition of PRTs vary between the countries that provide them and from province to province in order to allow PRTs flexibility in adapting to the environment they will operate in. Ultimately, individual nations are responsible for determining the size and structure of PRTs they lead. Key factors that help determine the structure and composition is the current security situation, the effectiveness of Afghan governmental institutions in the province,

presence and capacity of NGO's, and the status of reconstruction projects.<sup>62</sup> Of the twelve U.S.-led PRTs, the average structure included eighty-three military personnel and three civilian representatives from various U.S. departments and agencies, all of whom served in various roles that support the teams overall mission (see appendix B for PRT Task Organization). As of 2008 1,021 military personnel and 34 civilian personnel serve on U.S. led PRTs in Afghanistan.<sup>63</sup> The structure of the PRT is designed to support the "whole of government" approach by bringing in a number of federal agencies with different skills and resources to tackle a complex problem such as stability in Afghanistan. The military component includes the PRT commander, who is usually a Navy or Air Force Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel, an operational and administrative staff, a logistical support element, a platoon sized security element, and additional enablers such as two civil-affairs teams, a military police team, and a military engineer. The civilian component of the PRT strives to include at least one civilian from the Department of State (DOS), one civilian from U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and a civilian representative from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) (see appendix C for Key Leader Responsibilities). Finally, PRTs include an Afghan police officer from the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MOI). Though the PRT has robust organic military and civilian capabilities, the level of training varies widely among the different components.

Each member of the PRT has a specific role in the overall PRT mission. The DOS representative advises the PRT commander and civil affairs staff on political implications of their projects and maintains liaison between the PRT commander and the local government. The USAID representative is the principal advisor regarding development projects to both the PRT commander and Afghan provincial governor.<sup>64</sup> The USDA representative serves as the principal advisor to the PRT commander, aid organizations, and the local government to enable

and foster reconstruction of the Afghan agricultural sector.<sup>65</sup> Finally, the security element of the PRT protects team members outside of the camp but has limited offensive capability.

PRT pre-deployment training varies between civilian and military team members. Provincial Reconstruction Team training has five objectives: provide PRT members with needed skills for success, gain understanding of different roles and responsibilities of PRT members, build interagency and team camaraderie, provide the team with a country overview, and share lessons learned from previous PRTs.<sup>66</sup> Provincial Reconstruction Team pre-deployment training begins with military members attending PRT training put on by the Army at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.<sup>67</sup> The focus is on honing tactical combat skills as well as language and cultural instruction. PRT commanders and key military staff members also attend a three week mission-specific training program prior to a PRT being fully formed. Civilian members attend a three-week training program at Fort Bragg to learn field and survival skills.<sup>68</sup> The "Fort Bragg experience" also serves as an introduction to military life for the civilian representatives. The Department of State offers PRT-related classroom training to civilians serving on PRTs but this training is optional.<sup>69</sup> Upon arriving in Afghanistan the PRT commander, civilian representatives, and key military staff attend the ISAF PRT Key Leaders Orientation Course in order to become familiar with the ISAF PRT Handbook and understand the role of PRTs as fully integrated civil-military units.<sup>70</sup>

The chain of command for U.S.-led PRTs is complex. The PRT leadership team is composed of the PRT Commander and the civilian representatives from the DOS, USAID and USDA. The civilian representatives are "embedded" in the PRT structure in order to make the PRT a true civil-military unit. The PRT commander has final say on all security matters. Within the PRT, however, there are two separate reporting chains. The military component of the PRT

reports to the regional commander with responsibility over the province the team is located in. For U.S.-led PRTs this is predominately Regional Command East (RC-E). The regional commander is responsible for coordinating all civil-military activities conducted by elements of PRTs in their area of responsibility.<sup>71</sup> The regional commanders report to the Commander ISAF Joint Command (COMIJC) who executes day-to-day tactical operations throughout Afghanistan. COMIJC reports to the ISAF commander who dual hats as the COMUSF-A (see appendix D for ISAF Command Structure). The civilian element of the PRT primarily does not fall under the operational control of the PRT commander. Both the DOS and USAID report directly to the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. The PRT also coordinates laterally with local military commanders on development projects. In short, there is no single unified management for the PRT structure as the civilian elements of the PRT are not responsible to the military commander.

The PRT Executive Steering Committee (ESC) is an ambassadorial level committee that establishes strategic level guidance for all Afghanistan PRTs. The committee was established in December 2004 as a means of ensuring an integrated effort amongst the PRTs in achieving the principles stated in the Afghan National Defense Strategy (ANDS). These principles include the reduction of poverty, improving Afghan lives, and creating a stable and secure Afghanistan.<sup>72</sup> The ESC is co-chaired by the Afghan Minister of Interior and Commander ISAF (COMISAF). Additional members of the ESC include the Commander U.S. Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A), ambassadors from PRT contributing countries and a number of deputy Afghan ministers. Due to the committee's composition, it issues guidance to PRTs in the form of policy notes. Policy notes give guidance on PRT support for certain elements of security sector reform and reconstruction and development.<sup>73</sup>

#### **ASSESSMENT OF PRT INTERAGENCY EFFECTIVENESS**

To be effective, PRTs must integrate civilian and military efforts in order to achieve their three primary objectives of (1) extending the Afghan central government's authority; (2) improving security; and (3) promoting reconstruction.<sup>74</sup> The 2006 U.S. Army *Counterinsurgency* manual states that successful COIN efforts require unity of effort in bringing all instruments of national power to bear.<sup>75</sup> The PRT was developed as a counterinsurgency tool and its effectiveness depends on interagency cooperation. There are currently no established or agreed upon metrics for determining the effectiveness of PRTs. In reviewing current literature and lessons learned regarding PRT effectiveness from 2003 up to 2009, one finds a wide range of opinions regarding PRT effectiveness ranging from completely ineffective and causing more harm than good, to highly successful and a model of successful stability and reconstruction operations. The ad hoc nature in which PRTs were formed and in which they currently operate effects integration and guarantees resource shortfalls. In short, there are a number of reasons leading to the dysfunction and ineffectiveness of PRTs.

The first hindrance to effective interagency cooperation within the PRT program is the lack of clear objectives and guidance for both the PRT and key personnel within the PRT. This lack of clear guidance leads to confusion and forces PRTs to spend a considerable amount of time trying to figure out what they are supposed to do and what their limits are.<sup>76</sup> The absence of guidance stems in large part from the ad hoc nature in which PRTs were stood up, the lack of a single agency that has overall responsibility and authority for Afghan PRTs, and institutional obstacles such as competing interagency views on reconstruction and stabilization strategy. As the PRT concept was beginning in 2002, the US felt that giving PRTs overly specific guidance would limit their flexibility to adapt to the operational needs of their province.<sup>77</sup> As such, each PRT was expected to figure out and then address the most important issues in their province.

The 2006 PRT interagency assessment found that this caused PRTs to focus on local rather than national objectives.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, lack of specific objectives makes it difficult for PRTs to assess their level of effectiveness. The Afghan National Development Strategy and the ISAF PRT Handbook is a good attempt at promoting a consistent and coherent approach to PRT activities among the 14 nations that lead PRTs in Afghanistan.<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately, the U.S. interagency has failed to promulgate similar guidance that clearly outlines the mission, roles, responsibilities, and authority of each department and agency within the PRT.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, this lack of guidance has often resulted in the need for improvisation on the part of the PRT commander and civilians who then had to deal with cultural differences and competing mandates from their superiors in order to reach a consensus.<sup>81</sup> Civilian representatives often found themselves lacking a true understanding of the specific role and function they were to fill within the PRT structure. Though the PRT Handbook offers guidance, the U.S. has no stated individual mission description that can guide team members in the performance of their duties.

In 2007 Robert Perito from the Center for Post-Conflict Peace and Stability Operations, told Congress that "There is no interagency approved concept of operations for PRTs" and that the U.S. and its allies have no agreement on what PRTs should accomplish. Unity of effort is defined as the harmonized efforts among multiple organizations towards a similar objective. The ad hoc nature of PRTs and the lack of clear guidance results in the various agencies falling back on the way they are comfortable doing business. Robert Komar identified a similar lesson learned during Vietnam when noting that without institutional policy and guidance the different agencies are prone to execute guidance in a manner that is consistent with what they are institutionally used to doing.<sup>82</sup> The result is usually friction between the civilian and military components which have a vastly different culture and idea on the way stability and

reconstruction operations should be conducted. Lack of clear guidance is not restricted to internal PRT dynamics but also transcends relationships with adjacent military forces which operate in the same areas. One State Department representative found his role as political advisor in the Heart Province questioned by a Task Force commander. The Foreign Service Officer stated, "The commander of the task force was very action oriented and believed strongly that he was the political expert."<sup>83</sup> Not only was there no unity of effort within the team, but unity of effort suffered between the PRT and other military forces. Without clear goals and objectives it is difficult at best for the team to be effective. Guidance comes into the PRT through various means such as the DOD, DOS, USAID, and USDA. This guidance is often inconsistent. This is often the result of disjointed or uncoordinated effort at the regional and strategic levels. In short, after eight years of operating in Afghanistan, the PRT concept is still muddled with a lack of clear guidance and direction.

The second hindrance to effective interagency cooperation within the PRT construct is the need for a clearly defined command and control structure. The PRT program currently lacks unified management in the field. Unity of command is important because it promotes unity of effort through coordinated action of all elements of the PRT towards a common goal. Unity of command requires a single person be given requisite authority over all other elements. The PRT commander has authority over all military members of the team but has only a coordinating relationship with civilian members. It is difficult at best for one agency to control another. Only the Department of Defense is resourced and staffed to control multiple agencies. Unfortunately, civilian agencies often have an anti-Department of Defense culture.

U.S.-led PRTs fail to meet the unity of command principle in Afghanistan as the leadership of the PRT operates as a committee. The PRT program failed to learn the lessons of

the CORDS program in Vietnam which put pacification efforts under unified management. Both the internal and external PRT chains hamper civil-military cooperation and limit the effectiveness of the PRT. A visiting ambassador once asked the DOS representative on a PRT who was in charge. The State Department representative's response was "The four of us" (referring to the PRT Commander, DOS, USAID, and USDA representatives collectively).<sup>84</sup>

Mr. John Gerlaugh from the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy stated that within the PRT program coordination is not cooperation.<sup>85</sup> The PRT command structure was designed to have an integrated command group of civilian and military elements that could ensure the effective execution of security, development, and governance projects and programs.<sup>86</sup> The reality is that the civil-military coordination procedures are disjointed and leads to a command and control structure within the PRT that is personality driven. If the key members of the PRT are unable to work together and come to a consensus the effectiveness of the PRT suffers. The loose coordinating relationship within the PRT has proven to be a failure in Afghanistan.

The internal PRT command structure represents a consensus vice command decision process.<sup>87</sup> The PRT commander is responsible for the care and logistical support of all team members. Effective PRT commanders are those that are able to take in the advice of both civilian and military elements and produce a coherent and integrated strategy that promotes unity of effort. Unfortunately, this is not the case in many PRTs. Instead of the civil-military chain functioning as equals the military commander becomes the de facto "senior partner"<sup>88</sup> This is in large part because the military element has a majority of the resources and funding as well as commands the security element which is needed to go outside the "wire." Ultimately it is up to the PRT commander to determine how and when to integrate the civilian team members into the decision making process. While personalities matter, the success or failure of the PRT should

not rest on personalities and the hope that civil-military members are able to “work it out.” The 9/11 commission report stated it best when it said, “Good people can overcome bad structures. They should not have to.”<sup>89</sup>

The external PRT chain of command includes the military (ISAF and Regional Commands), the US embassy in Kabul, the PRT ESC in Kabul, and the Washington-based departments and agencies of the different representatives on the PRT. For example the DOS representative reports directly to the U.S. embassy in Kabul, which in turn has a direct line to Washington.<sup>90</sup> Though PRTs are guided by both the ISAF PRT mission statement and the ISAF PRT handbook, the reality is that the different civil-military elements of the PRT are often given guidance from their parent organizations.<sup>91</sup> When this guidance conflicts with that received by other elements and or the PRTs strategy, it must then be resolved at the PRT level by the different elements. Disagreements are often resolved based on the priorities of the military commander who has all the resources.

The third hindrance to effective interagency cooperation within the PRT construct is the lack of adequate resources provided by civilian agencies. The lack of resources can be broken down into two categories: personnel and funding. Trained and experienced military and civilian personnel are key to the PRT civil-military concept working. The strain on both the military and civilian agencies caused by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has made it difficult to find qualified people to fill key billets within the PRT. Unlike the DOD, DOS budgeting and personnel shortages have made it difficult to find qualified senior level professionals with interagency team experience to serve on PRTs. Furthermore, DOS employees cannot be compelled to serve in a war zone and must rely on an all-volunteer force to fill PRT requirements. As a result, a number of DOS representatives assigned to PRTs were junior and

lacked both experience and knowledge about even their own agency.<sup>92</sup> They learned their job through on the job training once assigned to the PRT. By contrast the PRT military commander usually has 15-20 years of experience and is a GS-13 equivalent. The result is how one DOD official puts it, “technically, the State person is supposed to be in charge of political affairs. But State can only get a junior FSO out there. A lieutenant colonel won’t take orders from a 30-year old who has never been in the field before....So what tends to happen is the military commander is the commander for the whole PRT.”<sup>93</sup> The DOD also has its shortfalls as it often assigns PRT commanders that have limited experience working in an interagency environment and possess personalities that are not conducive to the “consensus” command structure. The net result is a military commander that lacks confidence in his civilian counterparts while the civilian representatives are often unqualified and unable to win the confidence of the military commander due to their junior experience level. This ultimately affects the PRTs ability to bond into a cohesive unit.

A civilian DOS member of the Herat PRT stated in 2005, “The military commander, whoever he might be, has the planes, he has the cars, he has the vehicles, he has the tanks, he has the men, and he has a great deal of the money.”<sup>94</sup> In contrast, the civilian agencies are barely able to provide the necessary logistics and resources needed by their representatives to carry out their mission on the PRT.<sup>95</sup> Lack of resources proved to be an issue with a USAID representative in Helmand Province in 2009 when he found that Afghan government officials and Afghan civilians were naturally going to the military representatives because they were seen as the ones that had the money and resources.<sup>96</sup> This left the USAID representative wondering what his job was. Neither the State Department nor USAID have the people to send to

Afghanistan. Even if they did, current legislation prevents civilian agencies from ordering civilian personnel to serve in a combat zone.

Without proper funding civilian agencies represented on the PRT are unable to carry out their reconstruction and development mission. Unlike his civilian counterparts, the military representative has access to a large amount of funds available through the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP). This give the military commander leverage over the other agencies to complete projects that he or the military establishment might deem important. These projects usually have short term impact compared to the long term projects funded by USAID. There is no comparison between funds available to DOD vice what is available to USAID for humanitarian and development needs. In short, lack of civilian agency funding when compared to DOD funds further amplifies the military dominated culture of the PRT.

The fourth hindrance to effective interagency cooperation within the PRT construct is its military-dominated culture. PRTs in Afghanistan are experiencing the same issues that plagued pacification efforts in Vietnam, overmilitarization. This is a natural result of the imbalance between the Department of Defense and other civilian agencies. In 2008 1021 military personnel were assigned to PRTs in Afghanistan compared to only 34 civilian personnel. In contrast, only 750 of the 2000 CORDS personnel in Vietnam were military. Over eighty percent of the PRT structure is military personnel which includes the PRT commander. This usually results in a mindset that combat functions come first and everything else is a supporting effort. Furthermore, this tends to leave civilian representatives with the mindset that the military commander has no need for the civilian agencies. One representative to a PRT stated "he had no reason to have anything to do with the civilian component of the PRT. He had a great deal of money to spend on projects. He did not want the advice or the assistance of anyone who was trained in civil

affairs missions to help him spend his money wisely or logically. He would simply select projects that he liked and demand that they be pushed through.”<sup>97</sup> In short, the command structure of the PRT, the resourcing and staffing of the PRT, and the security dominated mindset of the PRT all lend to the view of a military-dominated organization with limited civilian agency capacity.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING PRT EFFECTIVENESS**

The President of the United States declared that we were a nation at war, fighting the War on Terrorism. DOD was at war. The U.S. Army was at war. But I have to tell you, the Department of State, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Justice, many parts of it, were not at war. They were not mobilized like our army and like our DOD military is mobilized. They were not expeditionary. They were not flexible to provide the kind of instant support to meet these evolving situations that the military was going through to address. This is a fundamental issue, that there was a huge imbalance between our defense establishment, fully committed to the war, and on a wartime mentality, in a wartime frame, and our civilian agencies were not.<sup>98</sup>

- After Action Comment from DoD member of PRT

If the United States is serious about stability and development operations it must take a number of actions to improve the effectiveness of PRTs in Afghanistan. This begins with the development of a coherent PRT mission statement, lines of authority and specific responsibilities for each agency within the PRT in order to enhance PRT effectiveness as an interagency tool. The Department of Defense plan and the Department of State plan for reconstruction and stability in Afghanistan need to be combined into a coherent interagency strategic framework.

The PRT command and control structure must be reorganized to promote unity of command and reduce the focus on the military-dominated aspect of the PRT thus moving towards a whole-of-government approach. A single US agency similar to CORDS is needed to provide operational oversight of PRTs in Afghanistan as well as future stability operations. A single representative on the PRT that has authority over all agencies and policies will serve to enhance unity of effort.<sup>99</sup> The title PRT commander is a military term that incorrectly conveys

his role to civilian personnel. PRTs in Iraq were effectively led by civilian DOS representatives. As such, the PRT lead should shift between between DOS and DOD depending on the operational environment. Ultimately, PRT effectiveness will benefit from a coherent structure that does not rely on personalities.<sup>100</sup>

Civilian agency representatives must be properly staffed and funded in order to allow them to move away from their current advisory role into an operational role. This would allow the civilian agencies to be primarily responsible for the coordination and implementation of relief and development activities vice serving an advisory role. Due to the large military membership within the PRT and the relatively small civilian component, PRTs are better suited for military tasks vice performing development assistance.<sup>101</sup>

The biggest hindrance to interagency cooperation remains at the strategic level where reform is needed. Real change at this level must be mandated by Congress in order to overcome institutional obstacles. The United States must enable the Department of State and other civilian agencies to be more flexible, expeditionary, and responsive. Furthermore, the huge imbalance between the Department of Defense and civilian agencies must be corrected. The President must push Congress to increase the funding of DOS and USAID in order to allow for the hiring of more Foreign Service Officers. This will allow these agencies to build a pool of experienced personnel from which to staff future PRTs in other theatres of operation. In short, there is going to be more situations like Afghanistan and the interagency must learn to do it better.

## CONCLUSION

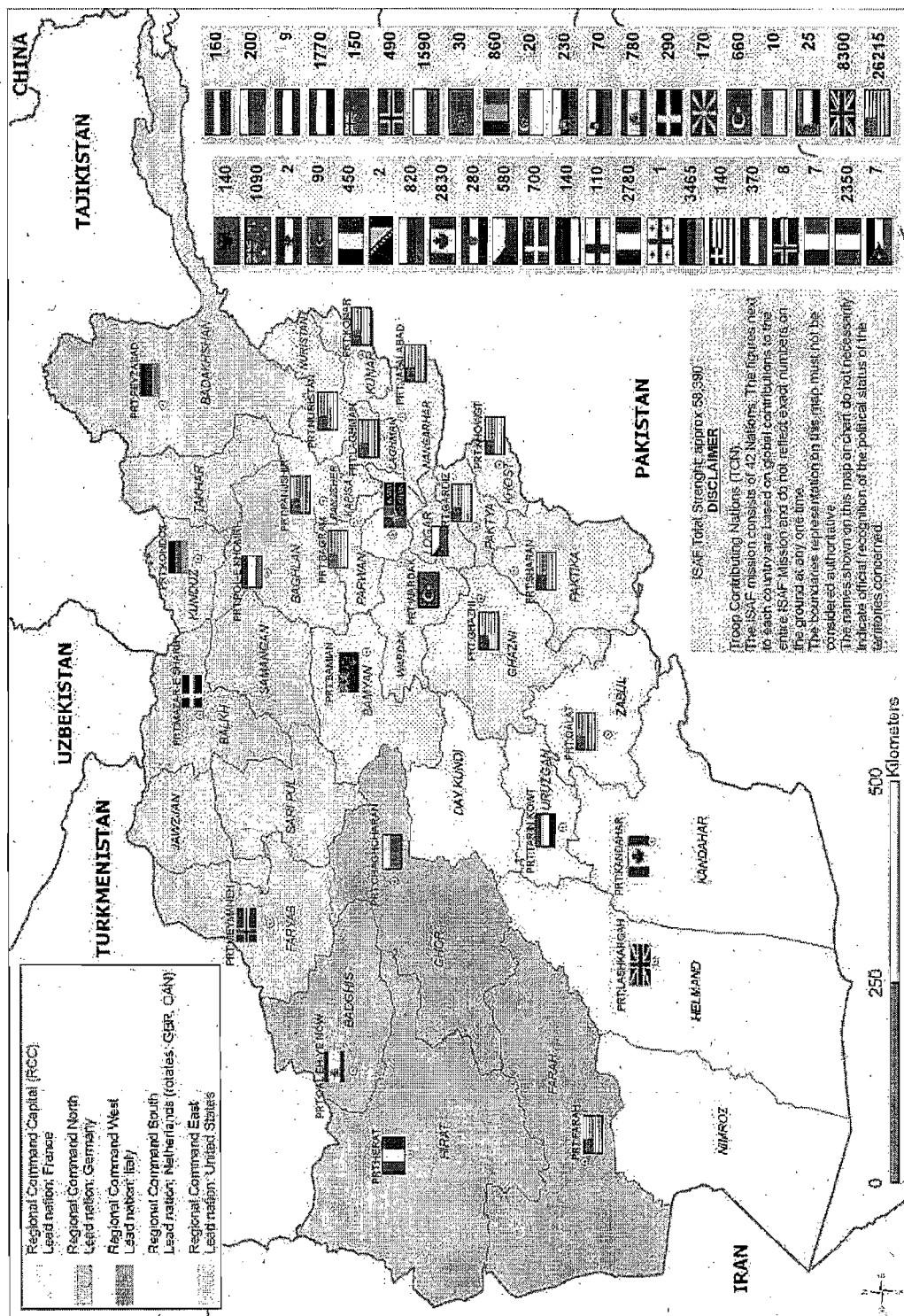
The primary objective of any counterinsurgency operation is to foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government.<sup>102</sup> The U.S. Army *Counterinsurgency* manual states that "The integration of civilian and military efforts is crucial to successful COIN

operations...Political, social, and economic programs are usually more valuable than conventional military operations in addressing the root causes of conflict and undermining an insurgency.”<sup>103</sup> In these regards, Provincial Reconstruction Teams have proven they can be a potent weapon against counterinsurgencies. But to be successful the Provincial Reconstruction Team must integrate each instrument of national power – military, economic, diplomacy and information. Unfortunately, the ad hoc nature of the PRT program is indicative of the overall U.S. approach to post-conflict stability operations.<sup>104</sup>

The success of the Provincial Reconstruction Team has been its ability to work in relatively unsecure areas due to its large military component, and then stabilize those areas because of the combined interagency components and resources of its members.<sup>105</sup> In Afghanistan PRTs have often been able to create an environment that is stable enough for local Afghan authorities and NGO's to begin to assume the principle role in reconstruction, governance, and economic development. Even though this is the case, significant interagency shortfalls remain with the PRT concept. Lack of a unified command and control structure leads to uncertainty within the team on where authority resides, lack of guidance leads to the PRTs performance being overly dependent on personalities, reporting chains that reach back in some cases to Washington are too distant to be effective, and lack of proper resourcing by civilian agencies leads to an over reliance on military capabilities and resources.<sup>106</sup> Many of the solutions to these problems can be found within the CORDS program, by looking at how our coalition partners staff and structure their PRTs, and by looking at how the U.S. PRT concept worked in Iraq. The House subcommittee looking into interagency cooperation in Afghanistan and Iraq was surprised to find that the ad hoc structure of the PRT had not significantly changed since 2002 nor had a clearly defined mission for the PRT that supports the coalition strategy and

Afghan governments been developed.<sup>107</sup> In short, the reconstruction lessons of Afghanistan, particularly as they relate to the ground level PRT concept, cannot be lost with the conclusion of the conflict such as they were with the CORDS program following Vietnam.

## Appendix A

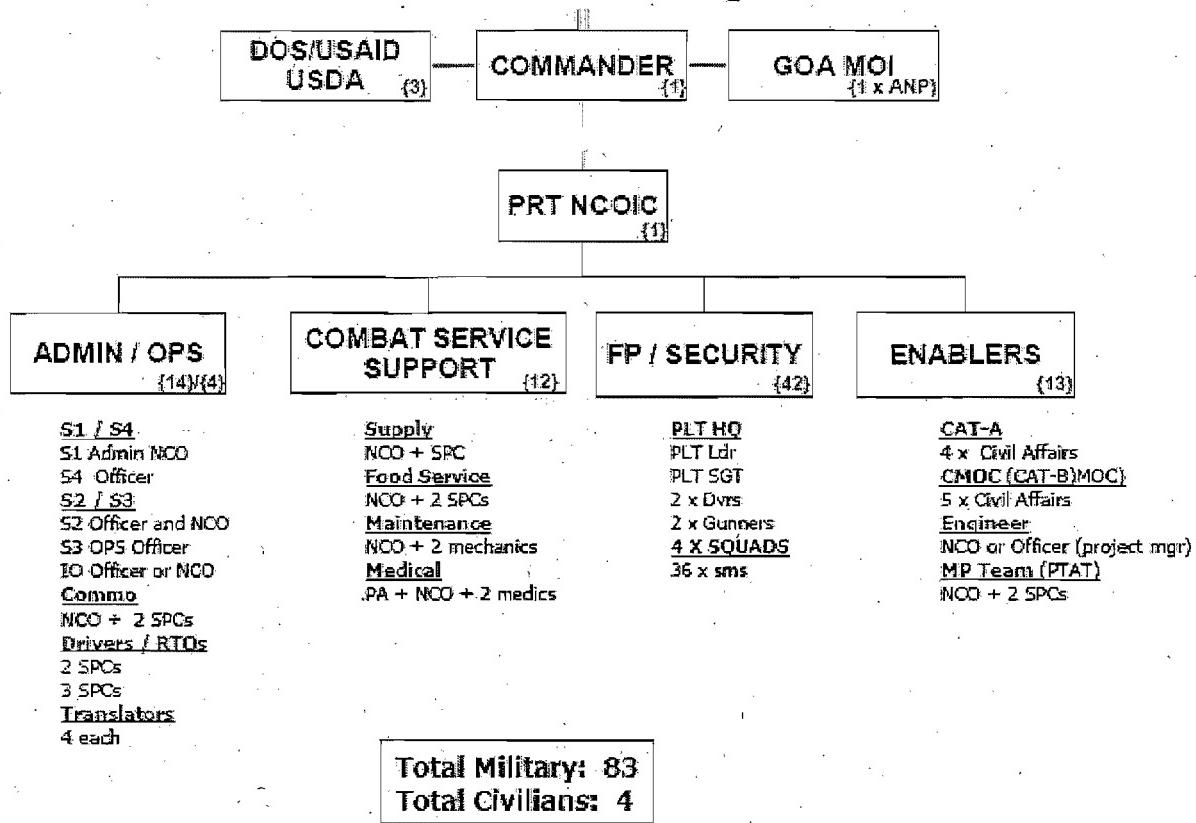


### PRTs in Afghanistan as of April 2009

Source: [http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/maps/graphics/afghanistan\\_prt\\_rc.pdf](http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/maps/graphics/afghanistan_prt_rc.pdf)

## Appendix B

# PRT Core Task Organization



**PRT Organizational Diagram**

Source: Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: An Interagency Assessment June 2006, 28.

## Appendix C

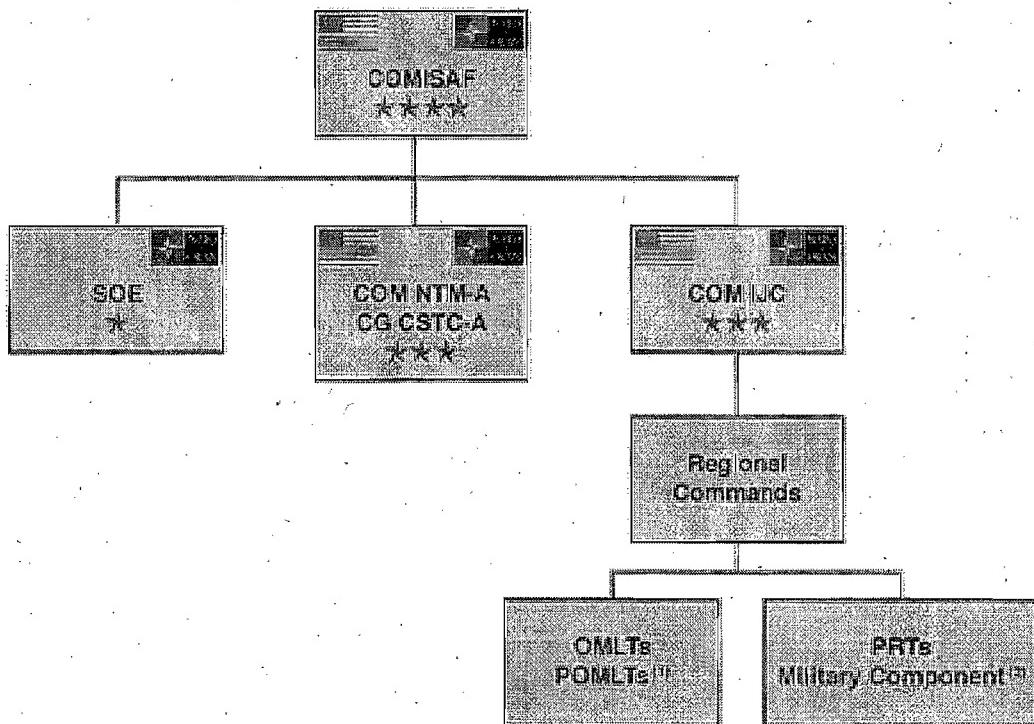
<b>Key Appointment</b>	<b>Key Responsibilities</b>
PRT Commander usually LTC or COL or civilian equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of PRT Strategy</li> <li>• Overall command of PRT</li> <li>• Conduct KLE with high level GIRoA officials</li> <li>• QIP/CERP project funding in coordination with PRT elements</li> <li>• Ensure all chains of command have same SA on PRT activities/issues</li> <li>• Harmonize all political, military and development activities within the Lines of Operations and understand the network of the PRT tasks.</li> </ul>
Military Commander usually LTC or COL. Duties usually assumed by PRT Commander if military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security operations, including framework patrolling across province(s), C-IED activities, joint patrolling with ANSF, support to DIAG/CN operations, etc.</li> <li>• Security engagement (CoP, NDS, PSC/JPCC, etc)</li> <li>• Force protection for PRT (civilian and military)</li> </ul>
Diplomatic Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of PRT Strategy</li> <li>• Lead on policy, governance and political issues</li> <li>• Political reporting, through the national chain of command, through ISAF channels together with CIMIC officers, and to HQ ISAF (NATO/ISAF PRT Weekly)</li> <li>• Engagement with key local actors (governor, PC, elders, tribal leaders, etc)</li> </ul>
Development Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of PRT Strategy</li> <li>• Development advice to entire PRT and local governance structures</li> <li>• All PRT Development interventions (projects programmes and policy), including CIMIC activities</li> <li>• Engagement with development actors (governor, PDC, donors, N/NGOs, etc)</li> <li>• QIP – Budgeting, programming, reporting, etc.</li> </ul>
Police Officer/Advisor/Mentor (May be EUPOL, military, or contractor personnel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police reform (incl. ANBP, etc) - training, mentoring, partnering, advice, etc</li> <li>• JPCC (and JRCC) engagement</li> <li>• Security intelligence fusion</li> <li>• Advise and direction to military police assets regarding police SSR</li> </ul>
Other Civilian Experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific advice and engagement as appropriate</li> </ul>
Deputy Commander	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist the PRT Commander as required</li> </ul>
Chief of Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the PRT daily routine allowing the PRT Commander to be free to operate and engage with key-provisional issues</li> <li>• Integration of all PRT (including civilian) activities:</li> <li>• Fusion and distribution of intelligence</li> <li>• Integrated information campaign</li> <li>• De-confliction of PRT activities</li> </ul>
CJ9 section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop mid-term projects</li> <li>• Run QIPs</li> <li>• Harmonize CIMIC activities, military Lines of Operations and the PRT activities</li> </ul>

### PRT Key Leader Responsibilities

Source: ISAF PRT Handbook

## Appendix D

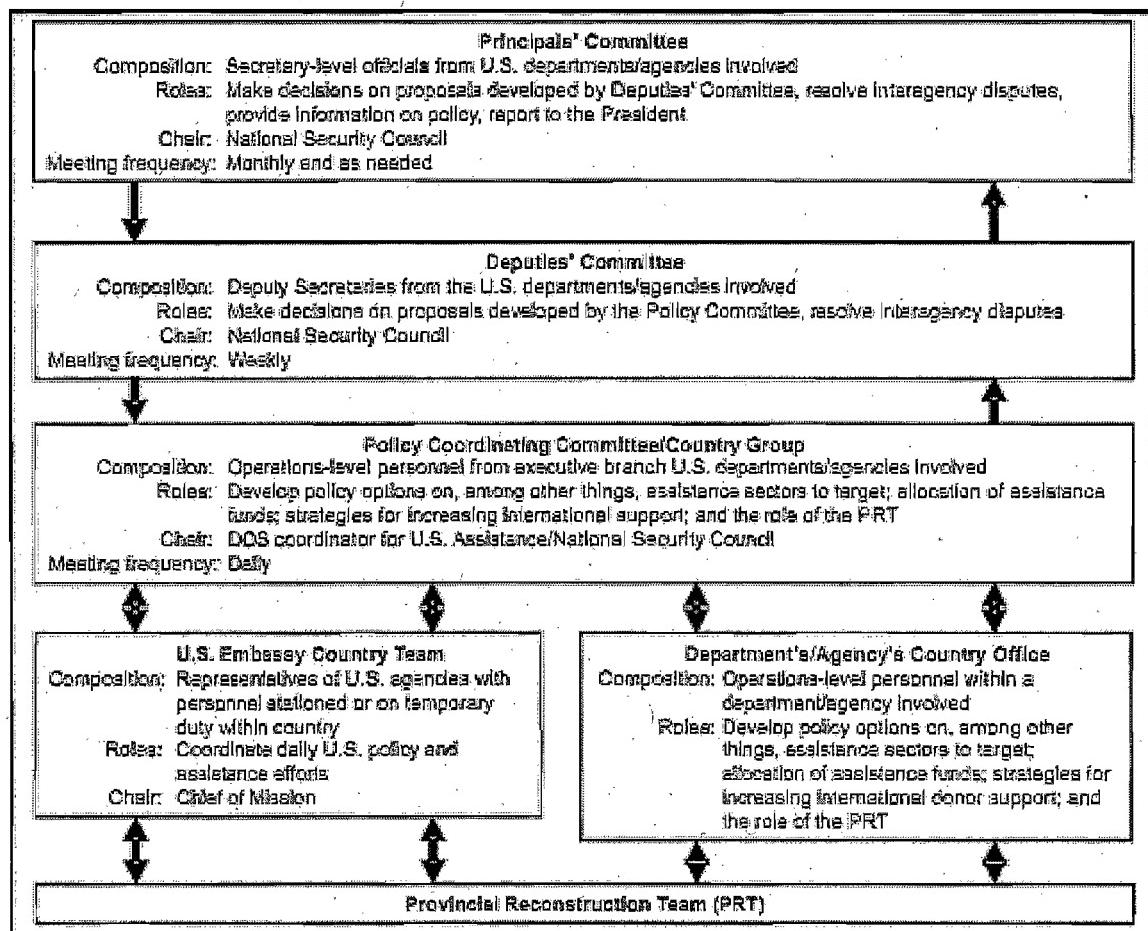
# ISAF Upper Command Structure



<sup>a</sup> Operational Monitoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) and Police Operational Monitoring and Liaison Teams (POMLTs)  
<sup>b</sup> The civilian component of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRTs) is run by the ISAF nation leading the PRT

Source: <http://afpakwar.com/blog/archives/5779>

## Appendix E



### Interagency Coordination Mechanism

Source: Army PRT Playbook, 23.

## **Appendix F**

### **List of Acronyms**

AFG	Afghanistan
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
CERP	Commanders' Emergency Response Program
CJCMOTF	Coalition Joint Civil-Military Task Force
COMIJC	Commander ISAF Joint Command
COMUSF-A	Commander U.S. Forces Afghanistan
CORDS	Civil Operations and Rural Development Support
DOS	Department of State
ESC	Executive Steering Committee
GiROA	Government Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
MACV	Military Assistance Command Vietnam
MOI	Ministry of Interior
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSA 47	National Security Act of 1947
NSPD	National Security Presidential Directive
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
RC-E	Regional Command East
S&R	Stabilization and Reconstruction
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USG	United States Government

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## ENDNOTES

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